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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 10/03/06

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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, October 2

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
October 3, 2006

09:52

Met with New Komeito head Ota and Secretary General Kitagawa,
attended by LDP Secretary General Nakagawa, in the Diet building.

10:04

Met at Kantei with Supreme Court Chief Justice Machida, followed by
Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shimomura.

13:02

Attended Lower House plenary session.

15:50

Met at Kantei with Supreme Court Justice Shimada.

16:12

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Met with Assistant Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Saka.

17:00

Attended LDP board meeting.

17:17

Returned to Kantei.

18:51

Met with Vice Foreign Minister Yachi.

19:30

Had telephone call from British Prime Minister Blair, joined by
Koike and Seko, special advisors to Prime Minister Abe.

20:41

Arrived at his private residence in Tomigaya, Tokyo.

4) British Prime Minister Blair hails Prime Minister Abe's plan to
put end to "postwar era" during telephone dialogue

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
October 3, 2006

Prime Minister Abe yesterday evening talked with British Prime
Minister Blair over the phone. The two leaders agreed to hold a
summit at an early date. During the talks, Blair expressed his
support for Abe's plan to break free of the "postwar era" and for
Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security
Council (UNSC).

According to Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Public
Relations Hiroshige Seko, Blair called Abe, and the talks lasted for
about 15 minutes. Blair noted, "I support Prime Minister Abe's
position that it is now time for society to break free of the
postwar setup."

In response, Abe indicated his intention to conduct education reform
modeled after Britain's.

5) Special Advisor Yuriko Koike off to US today to emphasize
importance of bilateral relations

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
October 3, 2006

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's special advisor on national security,
Yuriko Koike, will leave today for the United States to meet with US
National Security Adviser Steve Hadley, Chief Cabinet Secretary
Yasuhisa Shiozaki said at a press conference yesterday. The purpose
of Koike's US trip is to establish a stronger pipeline between the
Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) and the White House.
Another aim is to demonstrate to audiences at home and abroad that

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe attaches importance to the Japan-US alliance, by sending Koike prior to his visits to China and South Korea, which are now under coordination.

Prime Minister Abe said during his telephone talks on Sept. 27 with President George W. Bush that he would send Koike to Washington soon.

Koike is expected to meet with her counterpart at the White House on

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the afternoon of Oct. 3 (US Eastern Time). She will explain Abe's policies to Hadley and exchange views on bilateral relations and the international situation as a whole. She also plans to tour the National Security Council (NSC), which gives advice to the president regarding foreign and security policy.

The NSC, an advisory body to the president, is composed of the president, vice president, secretary of state, secretary of defense, secretary of the treasury, and national security adviser. Abe is

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considering setting up a Japanese version of the NSC in order to strengthen the policy-making function of the Kantei in the areas of foreign policy and security. Koike, therefore, intends to inspect similar organs in European countries.

6) Vice Foreign Minister Yachi to leave for US tomorrow

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
October 3, 2006

Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi announced yesterday that he would make a five-day trip to the United States starting tomorrow. He is expected to meet with Deputy National Security Advisor Jack D. Crouch and relevant officials from the State and Defense departments to exchange views on Japan-US relations and the situations of Asia and the Middle East with an eye on a visit to Washington by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

7) Prime Minister Abe to decide on his China tour today; President Hu willing to meet with Abe on Oct. 8

SANKEI (Top play) (Excerpts)
October 3, 2006

Following Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's confirmation of his intention to visit South Korea on Oct. 9, final coordination is underway for him to travel to China on Oct. 8. Abe will consult with Foreign Minister Taro Aso and other government officials on these trips possibly today and will make a final decision. A couple of government sources revealed these movements, which have come as both China and South Korea have indicated their willingness to accept Abe's early visits to their countries. However, some aides to Abe still remain cautious about holding a Japan-China summit, because China may in effect demand that the prime minister stop visiting Yasukuni Shrine. Japan and China continued behind-the-scenes coordination up to the last minute through a meeting between Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi and Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi in Tokyo yesterday and other occasions.

Abe's visit to China, if realized, would be the first China trip by the Japanese prime minister since October 2001. A Japan-China summit would follow the one held in Indonesia in April 2005.

According to several sources familiar with Japan-China relations, during the recent Japan-China vice foreign ministerial dialogue held in Tokyo on Sept. 23, Japan floated a plan for the prime minister to visit China on Oct. 8. In response to this proposal, China told Japan to assure that Abe would not visit Yasukuni Shrine while he is in office. Japan turned down this request. Then China indicated flexibility, stating, "It is all right for the foreign minister and the chief cabinet secretary to visit the shrine." Despite that, Japan refused to accept China's request, asserting, "Visits to Yasukuni Shrine should not be made a condition for the resumption of

a summit meeting." Japan then urged China to reconsider its request.

Afterwards, Japan withdrew its plan on the prime minister's China visit on Oct. 8 and instead sounded China out on a late October visit plan. On the other hand, on Sept. 30, China suggested a plan for Abe to meet with President Hu Jintao on the afternoon of Oct. 8 and later meet with Premier Wen Jiabao during a dinner party, sources said.

This sudden change in China's attitude came, "following Hu's firm order," a source familiar with Japan-China relations said.

In China, Hu's power base has been further solidified after the occurrences of such cases as the dismissal of Chen Liangyu, who is close to former General Secretary Jiang Zemin of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and is a member of the Shanghai Clique, from his post of secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the CPC due to his involvement in a corruption case. The above source gave this analysis about China's counterproposal: "It would be a message by the Hu government implying that it wants to improve relations with Japan by taking advantage of the inauguration of the Abe administration."

8) China, ROK avoid "shutting door" to Japan, set summits with Japanese prime minister

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 3) (Full)
October 3, 2006

A summit between Japan and China has been set for Oct. 8 and one between Japan and South Korea for Oct. 9. Japan has now agreed in principle with China, and South Korea on timetables for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's trips to those two countries. Beijing and Seoul have deemed it necessary to meet at least once with Abe, who has expressed enthusiasm about improving relations. But a sense of apprehension about these summit talks cannot be ruled out, because the gaps over visits to Yasukuni Shrine and historical perceptions have yet to be removed.

Katsuhiko Iino, Beijing; Hiroshi Minegishi, Seoul

The Chinese and South Korean governments have decided to resume summit talks with Japan, presumably because they are conscious of how they will be viewed by the rest of the world and also because they want to avoid giving the impression that they "shut the door" on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has just inaugurated his cabinet. It is therefore not the case that the two countries have dropped their call for a halt to visits to Yasukuni Shrine. Rather, their agreement to hold summits is intended to prod Abe not to visit Yasukuni Shrine while he is in office.

The Chinese government expects Abe not to visit the shrine for the time being. A source familiar with Japan-China relations commented: "Japan approached China with a plan for the prime minister's tour of China. Given this, once the visit is realized, Tokyo will not behave in a way to make China lose face." This source conjectured that China's acceptance of Abe's trip would pressure Abe.

President Hu Jintao and other Chinese officials have reiterated that they place emphasis on Japan. South Korea's move to accept a visit by Abe also had a favorable effect (on China). While former Prime

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Minister Junichiro Koizumi brushed off (China's) repeated call on him to refrain from visiting the shrine, Abe has stood firm in not saying whether he will visit the shrine. So what China is concerned about is that it may leave the international community with the impression that it is China that is negative about improving relations.

South Korea was sensitive to a shift in China's stance. These two countries have been at odds with Japan over historical issues.

"Rapid movement toward improved Japan-China relations forced South Korea to decide to hold a summit with Japan," a source familiar with Japan-ROK relations said. When the Japan-China comprehensive policy dialogue of vice foreign ministers was held late last month, South Korea asked Japan many times what Chinese officials had said in the session, according to the source.

South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun remains unable to produce any good results. "He can fan the flames of anti-Japanese nationalism, but if Japan-China relations turn for the better now, he could be exposed to criticism from the public and opposition parties for his diplomatic failure," an expert commented.

9) Hiranuma to visit Taiwan

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
October 3, 2006

The Japan-Republic of China Parliamentary Discussion Council, a nonpartisan group of lawmakers headed by Takeo Hiranuma, will visit Taiwan on Oct.8-10. The delegation is scheduled to meet President Chen Shui-bian and former President Lee Teng-hui. Hiranuma and other about 10 members will also attend a ceremony marking the National Foundation Day on Oct. 10.

10) Azadegan oil field: Iran may lower Japan's capital subscription, Iranian news agency reports

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 5) (Full)
October 3, 2006

A news agency run by Iran's Ministry of Petroleum yesterday reported that if INPEX fails to decide to start up development of the Azadegan oil field in southwestern Iran, to which Japan has given a stake, at an early date, the Iranian government might lower the rate of capital subscription by INPEX. The company has obtained the right to develop the Azadegan oil field under a condition that it will shoulder 75% of the entire project cost.

Iran and INPEX have been continuing talks on the timeline to start up the project since Sept. 30. The news agency quoted a remark made by a source involved in the talks, "If participants in the meeting fail to reach an agreement, INPEX will be able to take part in only a small part of the project."

INPEX and the Iranian side also held talks on the 2nd. National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Managing Director Nozaris told the news agency the same day that Iran would not agree to once again extend the deadline to decide whether to start up the project or not as sought by INPEX.

Commenting on the talks between Iran and INPEX, Trade and Industry Vice Minister Takao Kitabata yesterday stressed the government

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stance of calmly observing the talks on the private sector-level, noting, "The government will not send a high-ranking official."

11) NIOC Management Director negative toward Japan's proposal for extending deadline for Azadegan oil talks

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
October 3, 2006

Talks between Japan and Iran on development of the Azadegan oil field in southwestern Iran, in which Japan has a 75% stake, are going on in Tehran. Iran's Fars News Agency yesterday reported that National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Management Director Nozaris indicated a negative view toward the idea of extending the deadline for the negotiations for a month, noting, "If no agreement is reached with Japan, Iran will not set a new deadline."

12) Abe's Diet replies in answer-and-question session on Oct. 2

YOMIURI (Page 15) (Excerpts)
October 3, 2006

Historical perception

As was shown by the Aug. 15, 1995 Murayama statement and the Aug. 15, 2005 Koizumi statement, the government's perception of the last major war was that Japan, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. There are a variety of views on the responsibility of Class-A war criminals as state leaders, and I regard it inappropriate for the government to make a specific judgment.

Paying homage at Yasukuni Shrine

I have indicated, "I do not intend to say whether I will go or whether I visited the shrine." And that is my personal view.

Collective self-defense right

Based on such factors as changes in the international situation, evidenced by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles, the war on terrorism, progress in weapons technology, and expectations on Japan's international contributions, we will study specific cases to determine what cases will fall in the exercise of the right of collective self-defense, which is prohibited under the Constitution, so that the Japan-US alliance can function effectively and peace can be maintained. We will conduct the study based on discussions at the Diet and other venues, as well.

Constitutional revision

A constitution speaks of visions and shape of the country. The Constitution of Japan, which was established nearly 60 years ago under the deep involvement of the Occupation forces, is out of touch with the times. It is necessary for us to draft a new constitution that contains the ideal image of Japan and has a vision suitable for the 21st century.

I hope the ruling and opposition camps will deepen discussion in order to come up with a clear direction. To begin with, I expect an early enactment of a national referendum bill specifying a set of

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procedures for constitutional revision.

13) Abe pledges that in meeting with Chinese leaders he will honor apology expressed in Murayama statement

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
October 3, 2006

In the summit meeting with the Chinese leader expected to be held on Oct. 8, Prime Minister Abe is likely to pledge to honor "the apology and remorse" for Japan's colonial rule and aggression expressed in the Murayama statement in 1995 and the spirit in the Koizumi statement issued on the day marking the end of WWI in 2005 by previous Prime Minister Koizumi, according to informed sources yesterday. The governments of Japan and China are now in the final stage of scheduling the meeting between the Japanese and Chinese leaders. But Abe has decided not to accept China's demand that he should pledge not to visit Yasukuni Shrine and to stop short of mentioning whether he has visited the shrine.

On historical views, an issue over which China has expressed concerns, Abe intends to remark that the Murayama statement and the Koizumi statement are historical statements expressing at home and abroad the government's views about Japan's war time history." He then will stress the need for the two countries to make efforts to construct a future-oriented bilateral relationship.

He will also emphasize that "frankly reflecting on its past conducts that caused great damage inside and outside the nation, Japan made efforts and built a peaceful country."

14) Abe in first Diet reply: "It is inappropriate for the government to make a judgment" on the responsibility of Class-A war criminals

In a House of Representatives plenary session yesterday afternoon, Prime Minister Abe replied to questions from party leaders for the first time after assuming office. Asked for his view about the responsibility of Class-A war criminals, Abe said:

"There are various views in the debate as to the responsibility of war leaders. I believe it is not appropriate for the government to make a specific judgment."

Regarding the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, in which the Allied Powers judged Class-A war criminals, Abe stated:

"Based on the San Francisco Peace Treaty, our country accepted the judgments handed down at the trials. In view of state-to-state relations, Japan is not in a position to express an objection to the judgments."

15) Minshuto to demand conspiracy charge be dropped from bill amending Organized Crime Punishment Law

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
October 3, 2006

Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) has decided to demand that the conspiracy charge be removed from a bill amending the Organized

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Crime Punishment Law. This decision came after it was found through investigations by Minshuto and the Japan Federation of Bar Associations that the government argued in a meeting of at the United Nations in 1999: "Criminalizing conspiracy does not fit the Japanese legal system."

The government cites as the reason for its eagerness to create a conspiracy charge "the need to ratify the International Organized Crime Prevention Convention (focusing on antiterrorism measures)." But Minshuto asserts that it should be possible to ratify the convention even without a conspiracy charge. The opposition party submitted to the last ordinary Diet session its own bill that included stricter conditions for the charge than those in the government's bill.

In the current session, Minshuto intends to submit a revision bill calling for dropping the conspiracy charge.

16) People's New Party, New Party Nippon dissolve parliamentary group

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
October 3, 2006

The People's New Party submitted yesterday the notification of dissolving the joint parliamentary group with the New Party Nippon to the secretariats of both houses of the Diet. The reason is that the New Party Nippon did not punish Hiroyuki Arai, the party's secretary general, who had voted for Shinzo Abe in the prime

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ministerial election in the Diet, disobeying the group's decision (to vote for People's New Party President Watanuki). Since only two lawmakers -- one from the House of Representatives and the other from the House of Councillors -- belong to the New Party Nippon, they will become independents.

Party strengths in the Diet

House of Representatives

Liberal Democratic Party	292
Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) & Independent Club	113
New Komeito	31
Japanese Communist Party	9

Social Democratic Party & Citizens' League	7
Peoples' New Party & Independent Group	5
Independents	21
Vacant	2

House of Councillors

Liberal Democratic Party	110
Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) & New Ryokufu-kai	83
New Komeito	24
Japanese Communist Party	9
Social Democratic Party & Pro-Constitution League	6
People's New Party	4
Independents	5
Vacant	1

17) Okinawa gubernatorial election: Ruling, opposition parties to face off over USFJ realignment

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MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
October 3, 2006

Okinawa Prefecture will hold a gubernatorial election on Nov. 19, as Governor Keiichi Inamine's term of office is due to expire. The ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito has decided to field Hirokazu Nakaima, 67, former chairman of Okinawa Electric Power Co. (OEPC). Meanwhile, the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), the Japanese Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party (Shaminto), and the Okinawa Socialist Masses Party (Shadaito) will back Keiko Itokazu, 58, a member of the House of Councillors. The election will likely be a one-on-one duel reflecting the standoff between the ruling and opposition parties in the Diet. The issue of realigning US forces in Japan is certain to become a focus of the election campaign. Moreover, the election is to take place after this year's Oct. 22 by-elections for the House of Representatives, when the Diet is about to enter crucial stages in its extraordinary session. The ruling and opposition parties are both considering the forthcoming gubernatorial election as important as a national election.

The gubernatorial election will be held with the end of Inamine's term of office after having served two terms for eight years. The LDP and the New Komeito, which are the ruling parties in Okinawa Prefecture's assembly, wanted Inamine to stay on. However, they found Inamine firmly resolved to retire. The ruling camp then singled out Nakaima in the local business community in an aim to continue the Inamine regime with backing from the local business community.

In the meantime, on Sept. 1 the opposition parties almost gave up on fielding one candidate. However, they decided to field Itokazu, who garnered about 320,000 votes in the 2004 Upper House election. The gubernatorial election is now going to be a showdown between the ruling and opposition camps. The opposition bench asked Itokazu time and again until early this September to run in the gubernatorial election, but she firmly declined each time. However, Itokazu made up her mind to run if she could contribute to the joint struggle.

The election campaign will inevitably focus on the issue of relocating the US Marine Corps' Futenma airfield. In October last year, Japan and the United States reached an intergovernmental agreement to relocate the airfield's heliport functions to Camp Schwab's coastal area off Nago City's Henoko district in Okinawa Prefecture. However, there has been no progress in the Japanese government's local coordination. Inamine has been squaring off with the government while insisting on the idea of creating a temporary heliport. In January this year, Nakaima advised Inamine to avoid getting into trouble with the government. However, Nakaima completely changed his attitude when he announced his candidacy on Sept. 5, saying, "We will need to coordinate with the local communities and the prefectural government (over the planned relocation of Futenma airfield)." Inamine is popular in Okinawa, so the ruling camp wants to survive the race with an imprint of Nakaima as Inamine's successor.

The opposition camp is using the realignment of US forces in Japan as a tailwind. "We will never let them build any more bases (in Okinawa), and that's the biggest point. All the opposition parties must be pulled together, or we can't win." With this, Itokazu explained why she made up her mind to run in the race. In her election campaign, she will focus on the issue of realigning the US

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military presence in Japan.

18) LDP growing critical, DPJ confident in joint struggle

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
October 3, 2006

Ruling Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa, meeting the press yesterday, noted that the US Marine Corps' Futenma airfield in Okinawa Prefecture was dangerous. "We wonder if it would be better to leave it as is," Nakagawa said. "We will help Okinawa with its further development on our own responsibility," he added. He also said: "We want to make clear the point at issue in the gubernatorial election campaign. That's also for us to carry out the realignment of US forces in Japan for Asia and the world." With this, Nakagawa indicated that it would be a categorical imperative for the ruling parties to win the gubernatorial election in order to strengthen Japan-US relations. However, the LDP does not want base issues highlighted unnecessarily, so the LDP's campaign strategy, according to an LDP officer, is to give indirect backing (to its candidate) while showing consideration for local business communities.

Meanwhile, the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), headed by Ichiro Ozawa, will struggle together with other opposition parties in next summer's election for the House of Councillors, aiming to block the LDP and its coalition partner, the New Komeito, from retaining a majority. For the DPJ, the upcoming gubernatorial election in Okinawa Prefecture will be a test run. The DPJ and other opposition parties are now ready to field a single candidate. "Okinawa Prefecture's local residents are dissatisfied with the ruling coalition over the issue of realigning US forces in Japan, so we can win the election," one DPJ officer said.

DONOVAN